

## SUPPLEMENTAL CONVERSATION GUIDE – Key Messages for Health Care Professionals to use in Promoting and Supporting Pregnant and Parenting Young People in Breastfeeding

*It is important to make a commitment to ensure that breastfeeding support is consistently available for every mom and baby, every step of the way: prenatal, labor and delivery, NICU, and postpartum.*

**The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends interventions during pregnancy and after birth to promote and support breastfeeding.** “There is convincing evidence that breastfeeding provides substantial health benefits for children and moderate health benefits for women. Adequate evidence indicates that interventions to support breastfeeding increase the duration and rates of breastfeeding, including exclusive breastfeeding.” – *Final Recommendation Statement: Breastfeeding: Primary Care Interventions*. U.S. Preventive Services Task Force. October 2016.

**Your care directly affects breastfeeding success** – Both observational and randomized trials demonstrate that **routine health care practices can enable mothers** to meet their infant feeding goals – **or derail breastfeeding and increase health risks** for mother and child.

### First, before you meet with your patient in any setting –

- Remind yourself that the young person before you is a mom, not just a teen mom.
- Check your feelings, agenda, opinions, and/or assumptions about the situation at the door.
- Remember, you are there to support and help out. Provide her, her partner, family, and others with the education and accurate information needed to allow her to make informed decisions.

### PRENATAL PERIOD

- **Find out early what this mom’s hopes and goals are for feeding her baby. If it includes breastfeeding, promise to support her no matter what it takes.**
- **Ask, “What have you heard about breastfeeding?”** Tailor counseling to her specific concerns and educate about the evidence of significant health benefits for both mom and baby.
- **Emphasize that breastfeeding is a natural experience, but is a skill that will need to be learned.**

*Say to her:* “It is good to ask questions and learn about breastfeeding while you are pregnant. That way you can be well-prepared for when the baby comes.”

- **Assess how much support she has at home and in her community.** Engage partners, family, and friends in conversations and education. At a minimum, fathers/partners deserve the same education as she receives.
- **Encourage and assist with planning if she will return to school or work.** Provide guidance on how to discuss breastfeeding options with school/work prior to delivery to ensure a plan is in place when she returns.

#### Health benefits that may be most appealing to adolescent mothers include:

1. **Nutritional benefits** – breast milk is a natural source of nutrients and protection against a number of diseases and disorders (such as Sudden Unexpected Infant Death Syndrome; ear, respiratory, and gastrointestinal infections; obesity; diabetes; leukemia; asthma)
2. **Reduced costs** – medical care costs are lower for breastfed babies as they typically need fewer sick care visits, prescriptions, and hospitalizations
3. **Physical health** – breastfeeding contributes to a faster recovery from childbirth as well as an easier return to pre-pregnancy weight
4. **Mental health** – lower risk of postpartum depression for breastfeeding moms

### POSTPARTUM in the HOSPITAL

- Find out early what this mom's hopes and goals are for feeding her baby. **If she's at all curious, even if she's not sure how long or how much, but likes the idea of the breast milk, now is the time to try.** Check in with your team – nurses, lactation consultants etc. – to ensure everyone knows that breastfeeding is something this mom is interested in.
- Promise to support and help her no matter what it takes. **Outline the available supports in the hospital and how to ask for them.** Make sure that the mom meets with a lactation consultant and/or nurses that are well-versed in breastfeeding to help her understand and practice latching and baby-holding techniques for comfortable breastfeeding.  
*Say to her:* “It is natural, but is not easy. It will get easier. You can do this.”
- **No time to wait!** Promote skin-to-skin. Help the mom try breastfeeding in the first hour after delivery.  
*Say to her:* “It's important to get started right away to signal your body to produce milk. The first few days are the most important; we need to give it our all now, otherwise the window will close for breastfeeding.”
- Often, there is a family member, partner, or trusted adult that is at the birth. **Assess their level of engagement and support, and include them in conversations and education. At a minimum, fathers/partners deserve the same education as mom receives.**
- **Repeatedly praise and encourage her.** Praise can help communicate the significance of her accomplishment.  
*Say to her:* “You are good at this. Keep at it!”

### POSTPARTUM in the CLINIC

- **Prepare her for the work.** Provide anticipatory guidance, prepare her for what to expect and what to do if things get tough.  
*Say to her:* “It is natural, but is not easy. But it will get easier. If you want this, give it two weeks; give it all you've got. If you make it through the first two weeks successfully, the odds of continuing breastfeeding are good. You can do this.”
- **Support and help her no matter what it takes.** Outline the available supports in the community and how to access them. Make sure that the mom meets with a lactation consultant and/or nurses that are well-versed in breastfeeding to help her understand and practice latching and baby-holding techniques for comfortable breastfeeding.  
*Say to her:* “You can do this. I will help you and can help find others that can also support you.”
- **Keep praising her.** Praise can help communicate the significance of her accomplishment.  
*Say to her:* “Your baby gained weight because of your milk. You're a natural; you are good at this.”
- **See her as much as it takes to help her feel confident and on track.** If you can manipulate your schedule, add an extra visit(s).
- **At the two week mark, if going back to school or work, talk about pumping to get ready for the transition.** Will she have a place to pump? Encourage and support her in looking into options for a lactation space. If she is working, make sure she knows the law, and it's the law that she can have a pump break. Help her advocate for herself and develop a schedule that will work for school or her employer.

Visit <http://www.clocc.net/our-focus-areas/early-childhood/breastfeeding-support/youngbfsupport/> for more tools and information about supporting pregnant and parenting young people in breastfeeding.